



## Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 166

### CREATING THE EXCEPTIONAL WORKPLACE -- BUILDING A "STRENGTH-BASED" ORGANIZATION (PART 21 AND FINAL)

#### The Twelve Questions & Great Managers

**Recap.** “First Break all the Rules” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999) is a book that is being embraced by many fortune 500 companies (e.g., Delta Air Lines, Marriott, Sears, Toyota, etc.), as well as top performing, visionary public, private, and nonprofit organizations. The book is the product of two studies, conducted over a 25-year period, which surveyed 80,000 managers in 400 companies. The Gallup Organization conducted a factor analysis and found twelve items that separated effective and less effective organizations. Gallup then developed and tested a survey containing questions directly relating to the twelve significant items. The product is a trademarked survey known as the Q12. I basically outlined the book *"First Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently"* and its key points in earlier Flag Voices.

#### Where do we go from here?

**All unit Commanding Officers and Officers-in-Charge have received a personal letter from the Commandant.** *Admiral Loy asked for immediate meaningful action to ensure leadership at all levels are properly focused on improving retention of all workforces, reducing the rate of first term attrition and developing genuine expertise in diversity management. He also stated that he will be investing in organizational infrastructure to assist in addressing these issues.*

**I would hope that many of you, as leaders and supervisors, have begun to think a bit differently about how you lead your people.** Ask your direct reports what they think. Sit down with them and go over areas where you can improve your unit's or staff's workplace with the objective of creating "engaged" employees. Think differently about those newly reporting or hired. What are their talents and how can you place them in the right role? While we place people into specific billets and positions, and perhaps you don't have complete control over who CGPC sends you, but if you look at your entire staff or unit, you'll find more flexibility than you would first imagine in matching your people's strengths with the roles required to do your missions. For instance, one member might be especially good at taking care of the administrative work and another more adept at conducting unit training. It's not that you shouldn't expose each to the other job, but if you want exceptional admin and exceptional training, you will need to focus each where they can do your unit or team the best. Help make each of them even better at what they do best. The bottom line of the 12 Questions is creating a dialog with you people, not simply scoring your workplace.

**Building a strength-based organization is one of the bedrock pieces to Future Force 21.** Future Force 21 change is all about "breaking the rules" on how we've been doing business, such as career/job selection, professional development, leadership selection and development, and design of career paths. The focus changes from a “one-size-fits-all” approach to selection and development, to one where we first invest up-front in

selection for the “right” talents. In lieu of developing everyone to fill every role in the Service, we seek to place and retain people in those roles they do best, and further invest to make them the absolute best.

One of the Future Force 21 imperatives is to access talented people and better match them to careers. We need to recruit a high proportion of people with above-average abilities, including already trained people through lateral entry, and retain high performers for longer periods. The quality of our workforce is linked directly to the quality of people entering our Service. High quality talent implies better individual performance and better unit performance. Research shows high-quality recruits are more likely to complete their first term of service, less likely to be demoted or receive nonjudicial punishment, and more likely to be promoted faster and further than others.

This will entail shifting emphasis to personnel selection rather than taking all comers. Personnel selection pays off. Coast Guard people will have to operate in a more complex, information-rich, technologically sophisticated environment. The fact is an astounding one-fourth of Cape May graduates leave before their four-year commitment is up. Classifying people into their correct job and career categories is important for job and career satisfaction and hence retention. Performance significantly increases for individuals properly matched to jobs and military skill requirements. Personnel tests and assessment tools (“whole person” profiles) will need to be introduced to select the best fit for the Service and subsequent career field. Substantially reducing non-rate billets throughout the Service will minimize the dissatisfaction with non-Coast Guard work and maximize getting talented recruits directly into satisfying careers. Recruit training to “A” School to field will be the usual path for new enlistees. This will also have the added benefit of reducing turnover and on-the-job training load at the unit level.

**We commenced the path to change our culture last year.** We hosted two gatherings this last fall in support of the Coast Guard's leadership development efforts. These two sessions were opportunities to explore these concepts for building an organization based on individual strengths.

The first session was a preliminary meeting to plan the agenda for the "Leadership Forum" held at the Coast Guard Academy in October 2000. The desired outcome of the Forum was a plan on how to introduce leaders in the Coast Guard to Gallup's concepts for building an organization based on individual strengths . About 200 participants -- from all the "influencers" and "change agents" in the Coast Guard -- CGA/LDC, TRACENS, CDAs, CMCs, QPCs, FF21 Team, etc. senior staff (chief of staff/deputy/EA) attended the Leadership Forum on 16 and 17 October at the Coast Guard Academy. Involvement of top leaders in this effort is critical to its success.

### **The Goals of the Leadership Forum were:**

Disseminate information on strengths-based concepts to thought leaders and change agents throughout the CG.

Gather input from Forum participants regarding if and how these concepts might be applied to the CG's workplace and accession points.

Outline an action plan with milestones and responsibilities.

### **The Future?**

**We heard you both at this forum and throughout the Coast Guard. For those of you who have taken the Career Intentions Survey, we heard you loud and clear.** The data unmistakably indicate that local issues (workplace climate, supervisory leadership) are major factors why our people choose to leave the Coast Guard -- and not surprisingly are consistent with Gallup's findings. And a consensus at the Leadership Forum that we should go forward with the Q12 in a way that is right for our Service. Based on the feedback from the Leadership Forum, we engaged the Gallup Organization on how best to provide the 12 Question Employee Assessment Tool (trademarked by Gallup) to all supervisors and the necessary "train the trainer" so we can help our supervisors best use the tool to improve unit performance and workforce retention.

**We recently awarded a contract to the Gallup Organization.** This will provide us the capability, in conjunction with Gallup, to survey up to 6,000 members and employees, and more importantly to provide training to managers and supervisors in an attempt to increase communication up and down the chain of command. This is for commands (primary) and large staff elements (secondary) that voluntarily want to promote a better understanding of their organizational climate and facilitate a performance related conversation between supervisors and their workgroups. Response has been superb -- we already have units and staffs signed up that represent more than 9000! See website <http://www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm> for further information.

**An ALCOAST was promulgated last month that provided a brief overview of the Q12 project, and solicited unit participation.**

This project is not a panacea, and it is clearly not a short-term fix for our strategic organizational challenge. This project will be evolutionary, not revolutionary. It provides the structure for Team Coast Guard to take a hard look at who we are, and how we operate. See ALCOAST for further details.

Regards, FL Ames



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TO ALCOAST

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ALCOAST 522/01

COMDTNOTE 5351

SUBJ: INVITATION FOR UNITS TO PARTICIPATE IN GALLUP Q12 SURVEY

A. COMDT LTR OF 12 OCT 01 TO ALL UNIT COMMANDERS, COMMANDING OFFICERS, AND OFFICERS-IN-CHARGE

1. THIS ALCOAST INVITES UNITS TO PARTICIPATE IN A PROGRAM TO INCREASE RETENTION AND READINESS, IMPROVE COMMUNICATION UP AND DOWN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND, AND MEASURE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION IN THE KEY AREAS RELATED TO ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS. THIS PROGRAM IS IN SUPPORT OF THE ACTION REQUESTED BY REF A.

2. OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE COMMAND CLIMATE: THE CAREER INTENTIONS SURVEY AND NUMEROUS RECENT STUDIES HAVE IDENTIFIED COMMAND CLIMATE AS THE PRIMARY INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION. THIS NEW PROGRAM IS A TOOL TO MEASURE AND ULTIMATELY ENHANCE THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A POSITIVE COMMAND CLIMATE.

3. BACKGROUND.

A. THE CG IS WORKING WITH THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION TO USE ITS 12-QUESTION (Q12) EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEY AT CG UNITS. THIS TOOL WAS INTRODUCED TO THE CG IN OCT 2000 AT THE LEADERSHIP FORUM AT THE CG ACADEMY. THE Q12 SURVEY IS ONE OF SEVERAL

CONCEPTS PUBLISHED IN THE BOOK "FIRST, BREAK ALL THE RULES: WHAT THE WORLDS GREATEST MANAGERS DO DIFFERENTLY." THESE CONCEPTS ARE BEING EMBRACED BY MANY FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES (E.G., MARRIOTT, SEARS, AND TOYOTA) AS WELL AS TOP PERFORMING PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

B. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN BY THE BOOKS AUTHORS ARE BASED ON EXTENSIVE RESEARCH

AND MEASUREMENT, INCLUDING TWO MAMMOTH RESEARCH STUDIES SPANNING 25 YEARS, ONE MILLION EMPLOYEES, 80,000 MANAGERS, AND 400 COMPANIES. IT WAS FOUND THAT EMPLOYEES MAY JOIN A COMPANY BECAUSE OF ITS GENEROUS BENEFITS, SALARIES, AND WORLD-CLASS TRAINING PROGRAMS, BUT EMPLOYMENT LONGEVITY AND EMPLOYEE EFFECTIVENESS ARE GREATLY INFLUENCED BY THE SUPERVISOR-WORKER RELATIONSHIP. YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT THE KEYS TO CREATING AN EXCEPTIONAL WORKPLACE IN MY SERIES OF FLAG VOICES ON THE WEB AT [WWW.USCG.MIL/HQ/G-W/FLAGVOICE/FIRSTBREAKALL.HTM](http://WWW.USCG.MIL/HQ/G-W/FLAGVOICE/FIRSTBREAKALL.HTM).

4. ABOUT THE SURVEY: THE Q12 SURVEY IS A SHORT (12-QUESTION) SURVEY THAT TAKES ONLY A FEW MINUTES TO COMPLETE. E-MAIL IS SENT TO EACH PARTICIPANT WITH A LINK TO THE SURVEY ON THE WEB. FOR UNITS WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS, PAPER COPIES WILL BE USED. THE SURVEY MEASURES THE CORE ELEMENTS OF A WORKPLACE THAT CAN ATTRACT, FOCUS, AND KEEP THE MOST TALENTED EMPLOYEES.

5. USE OF SURVEY RESULTS AND TRAINING: SURVEY RESULTS WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SUPERVISOR OF EACH WORKGROUP. THIS FEEDBACK TO SUPERVISORS IS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND LOCAL WORKGROUP CLIMATE. IT CAN SERVE AS THE BASIS FOR A PROCESS WHERE SUPERVISORS AND WORKGROUPS WORK ON IMPROVEMENTS, SEE THE RESULTS, ADJUST, AND TRY AGAIN. THE FEEDBACK IS NOT DESIGNED TO BE USED BY MANAGERS TO EVALUATE SUBORDINATE SUPERVISORS, NOR SHOULD IT BE USED AS SUCH. GALLUP WILL PROVIDE TRAINING TO HELP SUPERVISORS MAKE THE BEST USE OF FEEDBACK.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESPONSES: SURVEY RESPONSES WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL AND SUBMITTED DIRECTLY TO GALLUP. CONFIDENTIALITY IS GUARANTEED.

7. ELIGIBLE UNITS: COAST GUARD COMMANDS AND LARGE STAFF ELEMENTS (STAFF ELEMENTS WITH 10 OR MORE PERSONNEL) ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAM. WE ARE INITIALLY LIMITED TO A TOTAL OF 6,000 INDIVIDUALS TAKING THE SURVEY. A LARGE RESPONSE RATE AND FULL PARTICIPATION IS REQUIRED AT EACH UNIT OR STAFF ELEMENT (GRANTED, SOME INDIVIDUALS MAY NOT CHOOSE TO TAKE PART, BUT ALL INDIVIDUALS MUST BE PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE PART ONCE THEIR UNIT OR STAFF REQUESTS TO PARTICIPATE). WE WILL HELP IN YOUR COMMUNICATION EFFORTS.

8. KEY DATES: DEADLINE FOR UNITS TO VOLUNTEER IS 10 DEC 01. THE SURVEY WILL

TAKE PLACE IN FEB 2002. RESULTS AND TRAINING WILL COMMENCE IN APRIL 2002.

9. TO PARTICIPATE: FOR MORE DETAILS, FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, AND TO VOLUNTEER FOR YOUR UNIT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAM, GO TO THE WEB SITE [WWW.USCG.MIL/LEADERSHIP.HTM](http://WWW.USCG.MIL/LEADERSHIP.HTM) AND CLICK ON "Q12 SURVEY."

10. POC: LCDR GREG STUMP, G-WTL-2, GSTUMP(AT)uscg.mil, TEL 202-267-6484. DUE TO STAFFING CONSTRAINTS, PLEASE CHECK THE Q12 WEB SITE IN PARA 9 PRIOR TO CALLING OR SENDING E-MAIL QUERIES.

11. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.

12. RADM F.L. AMES, ASSISTANT COMMANDANT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES, SENDS.